Speech from the Throne

by

The Honourable Marion L. Reid
Lieutenant Governor

at the Opening of the

Third Session

of the

Fifty-Eighth General Assembly

of the Province of

Prince Edward Island

on

March 19, 1991

at 2:00 p.m.

MR. SPEAKER AND MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY:

It is my privilege and honour, in the name of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, to welcome you to the Third Session of the Fifty-Eighth General Assembly of the Province of Prince Edward Island.

As I begin my term as Her Majesty's representative, it is with a special respect and satisfaction that I discharge these legislative responsibilities, having served in this chamber as an elected representative of the people. As other parts of the world make great sacrifices to achieve peace and democracy, let us be appreciative of our Assembly and the democratic traditions of Islanders.

MR. SPEAKER AND MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY:

When this Legislature last met, the world seemed to be on the threshold of a new era of peace and international stability. Indeed, momentous changes were taking place. The Berlin Wall had fallen, the Cold War was drawing to a close, and Eastern Europe was embracing freedom for the first time in five decades.

The world order has experienced positive change Mr. Speaker, however the brightness of our hopes has been dimmed by the recent events in the Persian Gulf. Canada was directly involved in this conflict, of course, and at this time I would like to express our appreciation to those Islanders who served in the Gulf, and my considerable relief that they are returning home safely.

MR. SPEAKER AND MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY:

Canada also has experienced conflict and change within its own borders during the past year. With the demise of the Meech Lake Accord and the resurgence of regional dissatisfaction in many parts of the country, the very purpose and composition of the nation is being questioned. Put bluntly, we are now being called upon to decide our fate as a nation. We must end the days of bickering and constitutional impasse. At this most crucial moment in our history we must not allow the forces of disintegration to thwart our future as a united people. Rather, we must re-kindle an acceptance and recognition of diversity, and the desire to stay together as one Canadian family.

Canada, Mr. Speaker, one Canada from the Pacific to the Atlantic to the Arctic, is not an outmoded nor an impossible dream.

In this Session of the Legislature, My Government will request that the Standing Committee on Constitutional Reform be empowered to consult broadly with Islanders from all parts of the province, for the purpose of giving our citizens the opportunity to speak on this issue of critical importance to all Canadians.

Prince Edward Islanders participate in this great national debate, of course, knowing that the Canadian Confederation was born here, and that any reshaping of our federation will need to be carried out in the same cooperative spirit present at the Charlottetown Conference of 1864.

MR. SPEAKER AND MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY:

Our constitutional difficulties are accompanied and compounded by the current economic recession. This recession takes place just as the country begins to adapt to a new free trade environment, a new tax policy, and high energy prices.

Although Prince Edward Island's economy is relatively stable this economic downturn will have its negative effects. It must be recognized that Prince Edward Island is unable to insulate itself from the economic hardships that are affecting other Canadians. This vulnerability exists principally because federal transfer payments to the Province are shrinking to the point where no real growth exists.

MR. SPEAKER AND MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY:

In spite of the divisiveness and cynicism which characterizes much of our national life and the economic recession which I have just described, Prince Edward Islanders continue to participate enthusiastically in the public affairs of their Province. Over the past year, My Government has sought to consult and involve Islanders in many of its policy decisions, and they have responded with guidance and wisdom.

Indeed, the greatest resource we have is our people, and together we are able to accomplish many things that other communities can only envy.

For example, who is not impressed by the spontaneous charity shown by Islanders towards their less fortunate neighbours in times of sickness or accidental loss? And most recently, who is not proud of the manner in which Prince Edward Island hosted the 1991 Canada Winter Games?

With regards to this last achievement, Mr. Speaker, I delight in joining with the Honourable Premier in extending the sincerest of congratulations to Mr. Orin Carver and the thousands of Islanders who were associated with him in hosting the winter games. Their efforts, along with the additional thousands who flocked to the various sporting and cultural events, assured an impressive example of national unity and a strengthening of the Canadian fabric. It was, indeed, a "Welcome Home, Canada"!

And, in recognition of the leadership exhibited by Mr. Orin Carver, My Government is pleased to establish a special scholarship trust, to be called the 'Orin Carver Scholarships', from which annual awards will be made to Island youth who combine academic excellence with the qualities that our host society president has demonstrated. These awards will be made in the areas of amateur sports and cultural development...the two areas of achievement pursued by Canada Games participants.

MR. SPEAKER AND MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY:

In our current economic situation, it is perhaps even more important that equality and equity are prevalent in society. Government has no way of guaranteeing such basic fairness, but it can, and should, provide a safety net of programs which contribute to the general welfare. Prince Edward Island already possesses one of the most effective and generous social assistance programs in Canada. In the coming year, My Government will provide new opportunities for the more vulnerable members of our community to re- enter the labour force. As well, general social assistance rates will be increased to protect against the effects of national inflation.

MR. SPEAKER AND MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY:

I am particularly pleased by the continuing efforts of Government to promote the strengthening of family ties among our citizens. I have long been convinced of an underutilization of our elderly in the character formation of our young people. The dividends which result from close associations between young and old are immense and, it can be argued, beyond calculation. For the elderly, it promotes a sense of continuing worth, and, for the young, it provides a sense of place. Above all, we must foster togetherness as a family opposed to the notion of "going it alone".

Prince Edward Island already has an excellent array of programs and services for its senior citizens, ranging from drug assistance and home care and support, to subsidized housing and community care facilities. To see that Government adjusts to the changing needs of the elderly, My Government will be appointing a Minister Responsible for the Elderly. This new ministerial responsibility will ensure that the concerns and special needs of our seniors are brought to the attention of Government on a regular basis. In addition, during the coming months, My Government will examine the possibility of establishing a province-wide Geriatric Assessment Program.

MR. SPEAKER AND MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY:

As already stated, My Government remains committed to meeting the special housing needs of our elderly, as well as those individuals in our society who find themselves unable to secure adequate shelter for their families. In the coming year, more than 100 new senior citizens and family housing units will be constructed in the various regions of the province.

MR. SPEAKER AND MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY:

In October of 1988 My Government established the Royal Commission on the Land to address land use and ownership issues in the province, and to recommend a direction in this important area of public planning. For years successive administrations have struggled with the complexities of land policy, and the difficulty of reconciling the rights of individual property owners with the perceived collective rights of all Islanders. This dilemma is historical, and made especially challenging to our province because of its limited geography and high population density.

To prepare and coordinate the development of new provincial land use policies, My Government has appointed a Special Coordinator of Land Resources. This senior public servant will report directly to Executive Council, and will be responsible for preparing legislation and recommending changes in public policies and programs, to ensure that the Royal Commission Report is implemented in a systematic and decisive manner.

MR. SPEAKER AND MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY:

My Government is committed to the adoption of new legislation, policies and plans that will better enable economic development to work in harmony with our precious landscape and land resources.

Certainly, the scenic beauty of our Island shoreline must be preserved through careful management, for the practical benefit of tourism and recreation, but also because it holds an intrinsic value for all Islanders.

Consequently, Mr. Speaker, My Government will act quickly to define a coastal planning area, and to impose a moratorium on residential development in this coastal area for up to eighteen months, until such time as appropriate legislation can be formulated for long-term protection.

In addition to coastal lands, My Government also will announce as this Session progresses, new policies and accompanying regulatory and program changes related to the retention of agricultural and forestry resource lands, control of access along major highways, the protection of wetlands, beaches and dunes and other provincial land use issues.

Moreover, immediate steps will be taken to improve Government's capability in the area of computerized land- based information management, so that land use issues can be analyzed on a province-wide basis.

MR. SPEAKER AND MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY:

This Assembly owes a considerable debt of gratitude to Mr. Doug Boylan and his fellow commissioners, Ms. Gail Welner, Mr. Elmer MacDonald, and Mr. Hugh Robbins, together with their dedicated staff, for their major contribution to public policy development in Prince Edward Island.

What should be abundantly clear, Mr. Speaker, is Government's intention to implement the Report of the Royal Commission on the Land both in spirit and in substance. Future generations of Islanders deserve nothing less.

MR. SPEAKER AND MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY:

We have seen in the past month how the very basis of our Island's most valuable industry can be suddenly and unpredictably threatened by plant disease. This vulnerability has had a sobering effect on the agricultural industry, on government agencies, and on all Islanders who for decades have identified their province with seed potatoes.

MR. SPEAKER AND MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY:

My Government, if it wished to do so, could cast blame, and look for simple causes and remedies to this most serious problem. However, no useful purpose would be served by this course of action. My Minister of Agriculture, his colleague, the Federal Minister of Agriculture, who is responsible for the *Plant Protection Act*, and the PEI Potato Marketing Board, as well as our dealers and primary producers, all acted with professionalism and responsibility.

The reality, Mr. Speaker, is that the PVY^{n} virus exists and must be eradicated quickly and completely from Prince Edward Island fields. Moreover, our growers and dealers, who sustained financial loss must be fairly compensated by the Government of Canada.

My Government stands committed to both these courses of action.

MR. SPEAKER AND MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY:

The agricultural industry continues to be the primary engine of growth in our Island economy, and My Government has always believed that adding value to our primary products is the greatest economic challenge facing Prince Edward Islanders. During the past year we have seen construction of the McCain Potato Processing Plant at Albany. As well, My Government, in concert with the Government of Canada, is continuing to work with Cavendish Farms in the planning of a major expansion to their existing plant at New Annan, and in the design and development of a much improved waste treatment facility.

Upon completion, these two projects will create much needed employment, stimulate growth in the potato industry and enhance our exports.

In addition, new initiatives will be taken to improve the market strength of Prince Edward Island food products and strengthen the competitiveness of the industry in a sustainable fashion. These initiatives will add value through quality enhancement and assurance. A new income insurance program for food crops, beginning with grains and oilseeds, also will be introduced in the coming year.

MONSIEUR L'ORATEUR ET DÉPUTÉS DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE :

Mon gouvernement a travaillé avec diligence et efficacité pour promouvoir la protection et la conservation de l'environnement, et de nouvelles démarches seront prises au cours de l'année à venir. La participation au *Eastern Habitat Joint Venture* nous permettra de mieux gérer nos ressources en oiseaux aquatiques. De plus, on élaborera un programme éducationnel sur les pratiques de gestion des déchets solides, sur les installations d'élimination et sur le recyclage.

Mon gouvernement poursuivra aussi ses efforts de protection et d'amélioration de nos ressources en eau souterraine et en eau de surface et étudiera la qualité de l'eau et les réseaux de contrôle de qualité dans notre province.

MONSIEUR L'ORATEUR ET DÉPUTÉS DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE :

Mon gouvernement a toujours l'intention d'établir une installation de cogénération d'électricité dans le Grand Charlottetown. Ce projet sera le plus important jamais entrepris à l'Île-du-Prince-Édouard. Conforme à l'engagement de mon gouvernement à protéger et à améliorer nos forêts, des installations de pépinières forestiàres seront développées au cours de l'année prochaine, ce qui augmentera notre capacité de production annuelle de semis d'environ quarante pour cent.

MR. SPEAKER AND MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY:

Our fishing industry creates thousands of direct and indirect jobs for Islanders and is vital to the health of our rural communities.

Over the past year, My Government has worked closely with our fish processors to add more value to processing, and to more effectively market their products.

The poor market conditions experienced by our lobster industry last season prompted My Government to negotiate a special cost-shared Lobster Promotions Program with the Government of Canada. In the 1991 season this initiative will provide assistance to further stabilize markets through market research and product promotions.

The mussel and oyster fishery, as well as the finfish culture sector, continues to grow. Programs and services will be made available to improve its efficiency and cost- effectiveness. As well, further initiatives will be undertaken to improve the environmental sustainability of this young and vital industry.

In addition, My Government will continue to play an important advocacy role on behalf of our fishing industry by attempting to influence federal fisheries management decisions so as to ensure equitable access to the Atlantic fisheries resource.

Over the coming year efforts will also be made to improve efficiency and technological competitiveness in both the fishing and processing sectors.

MR. SPEAKER AND MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY:

This past year has seen a strategic rebuilding of the economy of Eastern Prince County. At CFB Summerside, a new aerospace centre is being established to accommodate a broad range of aviation and related industries. Already two major companies have announced plans to locate at the base, promising to create over 300 jobs.

The expansion in food processing in the area, the re- opening of Summerside Seafoods, the recently-announced GST office, as well as other still to be announced initiatives, are evidence of new hope and opportunity for the people of East Prince.

MR. SPEAKER AND MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY:

Government will continue to work in partnership with the community at large, and in this regard I would like to acknowledge once again the excellent efforts of our regional advisory boards, area industrial commissions and local development corporations, in helping to achieve economic development across the province.

In West Prince, for example, community organizations working in concert with Government, were responsible for the development of the new Mill River Aquaplex, extension of the West Point Lighthouse facilities, renovations and improvements to the four major ice arenas, along with a host of other social and cultural projects.

In the coming year, both the Summerside Waterfront Development Corporation and the Charlottetown Area Development Corporation plan major initiatives that will enhance the infrastructure and aesthetics of these two urban areas.

In Kings County the Board of Georgetown Shipyards has approved the installation of a ship lift system that will enable the yard to compete with other maritime yards for more lucrative ship maintenance contracts.

The Brudenell Resort will be expanded and modernized, and construction will begin on a world-class golf course at Lakeside in the spring of 1991.

MR. SPEAKER AND MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY:

Over the past decade the tourism industry in Prince Edward Island has acquired organizational strength and a maturity of leadership. Our operators know their industry. They realize, for instance, that the natural beauty of the Island landscape will continue to represent our greatest asset as we endeavour to compete in the national and international marketplace. They know as well that quality service and value are essential to the industry's future success, and that, in what are keenly competitive times, marketing will have to be sophisticated, creative, and fully responsive to the needs of the industry.

MR. SPEAKER AND MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY:

My Government, on behalf of the tourist operators across the Province, will place an enabling bill before this Session, to give our tourism entrepreneurs full and direct responsibility for the promotion and marketing of their industry.

This does not mean, however, that Government will discontinue its own involvement and interest in the further development of the tourism industry. On the contrary, initiatives will be continued to support cooperative planning, and to ensure a high standard of excellence across the industry. Efforts also will continue to extend the tourism season, and to attract and promote special events such as the Atlantic Golf Classic and the 1991 Culinary Masters Competition.

MR. SPEAKER AND MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY:

I spoke earlier about the general economic recession that currently plagues Canadians, and the difficulty of a small province like ours to insulate against its effects. In better economic times, public capital construction plays an important role as a stimulator of economic growth. Such activity, however, takes on an even greater significance when private sector growth is less predictable.

MR. SPEAKER AND MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY:

In addition to the initiatives previously announced in the coming year, My Government will undertake major extensions and renovations to Colonel Gray and Charlottetown Rural High Schools, begin construction of the new highway sign shop in Tignish, construct a new administrative facility in Kensington to house the Provincial Potato Services Division, and complete major improvements at the Brookvale Ski Park.

As well, construction will continue on the new elementary school in Cornwall, and on the French School and Cultural Centre and Queen Charlotte Junior High School buildings in Charlottetown. The new Alberton Hospital facility will also be completed in 1991.

Moreover, planning and design work will be completed for the new elementary school at Borden, the Provincial Library Headquarters in Morell, and the O'Leary Community Hospital.

Major renovations will be undertaken at Summerset Manor and the Prince Edward Home. The Queens County Maintenance Depot will be relocated to better serve the travelling public. In addition, Red Point Park will undergo a major expansion.

MR. SPEAKER AND MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY:

My Government remains committed to a first-class primary highway network for Prince Edward Island. In order to further this commitment, it will be necessary once again to increase funding for provincial road construction and maintenance for the coming year.

MR. SPEAKER AND MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY:

First and foremost, the role of a democratically-elected Government is to serve the needs of the people, and as those needs change, so then must the structures and methods of Government change. Such reform of Government itself can either be incidental, or it can be carefully planned and broad in scope.

MR. SPEAKER AND MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY:

A few months ago My Government, desiring to modernize the structure of Government, created a special Cabinet Committee on Government Reform. This Committee has been asked to examine all Government programs and services, with a view to improving their effectiveness and efficiency.

In this Session of the Legislature, members will be asked to approve the creation of new agencies to deliver programs and services in lending, marketing and development, as well as a new combined regulatory agency. These agencies will amalgamate and better integrate existing programs and services, and result in higher quality and more cost-effective administration.

MR. SPEAKER AND MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY:

My Government will continue to provide services to Island francophones in their own language. In fact, the level and quality of French services we have been able to provide, with the assistance of the federal government, is admired across Canada.

We remain committed, Mr. Speaker, to strengthening Acadian culture and the French language in this province, regardless of any constitutional outcome nationally. This commitment is manifested physically in two projects nearing completion, the French School and the Cultural Centre in Charlottetown, and the Acadian Museum at Miscouche.

My Government is committed to the promotion of a multicultural Canada and in this regard is pleased to support the United Nations Proclamation which designates March 21st as the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

MR. SPEAKER AND MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY:

My Government values highly its relationship with Island municipalities, a relationship which is built on openness and consultation. Together, the province and its local governments have joined in several important initiatives over the past year, including a covenant agreement to develop the unique historical resources of Charlottetown as the birthplace of Confederation, a study of provincial- municipal fiscal relations, and efforts to protect regional water quality and quantity.

MR. SPEAKER AND MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY:

My Government's relations with the Government of Canada and the other Provinces and Territories are becoming increasingly important. In the coming year, not only the constitution, but other vital issues will be debated on the regional and national fronts. These issues range from greater economic cooperation among the Maritime Provinces, to inter-provincial and international trade, to fiscal arrangements for funding health care and higher education.

It's essential, Mr. Speaker, that Prince Edward Island participate fully and forcefully in those inter-governmental discussions, so that our interests are protected.

MR. SPEAKER AND MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY:

In addition to the measures already outlined, my Ministers will be announcing a variety of new initiatives as this Session progresses. As well, you will be asked to consider a number of legislative proposals, including:

- An act to amend the *Natural Products Marketing Act;*
- An act to amend the *Teacher's Superannuation Act;*
- A new *Tobacco Restraint Act;*
- An act to amend the *Maintenance Enforcement Act;*
- A *Heritage Property and Protection Act;*
- An act to amend the *Workers Compensation Act;*
- An act to amend the *Highway Traffic Act;*
- An act to amend the *Audit Act;* and
- A *Libraries Act*.

You will be asked also to appropriate the funds for the services and payments required by this Assembly.

The public accounts and the reports of the various departments and agencies of My Government for the year ending March 31, 1990, will be tabled for your information. The interim report, forecasting estimated revenues and expenditures for the fiscal year ending March 31, 1991 and estimates of revenues and expenditures for the fiscal year beginning April 1, 1991 will be presented for your consideration.

MR. SPEAKER AND MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY:

My Government is prepared and equipped to provide strong leadership for the people of Prince Edward Island during this time of uncertainty, challenge and change. Substantial cuts in federal government transfer payments are placing extreme pressure on all provinces. A number of Provinces have indicated already that drastic funding reductions will be made in health care, education and in public service staffing.

Mr. Speaker, Prince Edward Island is a small Province with limited resources and a narrow tax base. It would be unwise and imprudent for My Government to increase provincial taxes beyond the regional average. To take such an action would inhibit our ability to compete in an ever-broadening marketplace. However, My Government believes that it would also be equally unwise and imprudent to legislate a host of cutbacks in programs, services and personnel at this time.

MR. SPEAKER AND MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY:

Balance and partnership remain the central themes of My Government. In each of the areas My Government is called on to serve: in encouraging economic activity, in stimulating community and rural development, in protecting our natural and cultural environment, in delivering human and social services, and in providing sound financial management, My Government has made every attempt to approach its responsibilities in partnership with the various sectors of our Island society.

Especially in these difficult economic times, Mr. Speaker, My Government will first and foremost rely on the relationship it has developed with our trade union movement, our health care and school systems, our community agencies, and other Islanders to address problems that have a potential to affect Islanders adversely. My Government is, however, mindful of the various legislative and policy instruments available to shape public policy development in a manner consistent with the greater public good.

May Divine Providence guide you in your deliberations.